



Info-Brief

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"We are going to be steady in our diplomatic track here because we believe that a concerted and coherent diplomatic policy that the world is behind will convince the Iranians that they have to come back into compliance with what the international community is demanding of them."

***Condoleezza Rice,
Secretary of State***



"Current confrontation is not about denying Iran access to civilian nuclear power, a right that it enjoys under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. This is about stopping Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability, and there is no right under the treaty that provides for enrichment if the purpose of that enrichment is for a nuclear weapons program."

***Robert Joseph,
Under Secretary of State
for Arms Control and International Security***



"The United States, like Russia, very much wants to see a diplomatic solution to this problem. We've supported Russia's proposal to establish a joint venture with Iran on Russian soil to enrich fuel, but Russia has made very clear that in order to implement that proposal, Iran needs to return to a moratorium on all enrichment activity. And so, I think the coordination between Russia and the United States has been very good and very close. It's only through a strong, solid international front that we're going to get Iran's attention."

***William J. Burns,
U.S. Ambassador to Russia***

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Rice Gives Iran Weeks, not Months, To Decide on Nuclear Talks

Washington -- Iran has weeks, not months, to respond to the proposals from the international community to resolve the diplomatic impasse over Iran's nuclear activities, according to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

"[W]e can't wait for months while Iran again says on the one hand maybe they're interested in negotiating, on the other hand maybe they're not. They need to make a choice and the international community needs to know whether negotiation is a real option or not," Rice told reporters in Vienna, Austria, June 2.

The international community is putting forth a package of incentives and penalties aimed at persuading the Iranian government to suspend its uranium enrichment activities and return to negotiations about its nuclear program.

"I hope that the Iranian government will take a little time to think about the proposal that is being presented to it. This is a way out of the impasse if Iran indeed wants a way out of the impasse," she told a CBS News reporter.

Iran has been at loggerheads with the international community over its nuclear program since January, when it ended a 14-month moratorium on its uranium enrichment activities and abandoned talks with United Kingdom, France and Germany (the EU-3).

Foreign ministers from the United Kingdom, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States met in Vienna June 1 to draw up detailed plans for two possible courses of action with regard to Iran.

"One is a path that would give Iran considerable benefits, including civil nuclear power. The other, though, is a path that goes to the Security Council again and can use then the full weight of the Security Council to isolate Iran," Rice said.

Officials refused to reveal the details of the package before Iran has had time to consider it. "Because of the nature of the diplomacy and because of the delicate aspect of the negotiations that will now ensue with Iran, I am not going to be giving you the details of the package that was agreed to," Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs R. Nicholas Burns told reporters in Vienna.

A civil nuclear power program would be central to any future negotiations, as Iranian officials consistently have claimed that this is the sole aim of their nuclear

research activities. Within the past year, however, Iran has rejected offers from both the EU-3 and Russia that would have provided it with nuclear power facilities but avoided the proliferation risk of having uranium enrichment on Iranian soil.

U.S. officials showed little concern at Iran's initial dismissal of a U.S. offer to join the Iranian-European negotiations. Iranian officials have rejected the demand that Iran suspend its nuclear activities as a condition for the resumption of negotiations. Rice said the Iranians do not yet have the full set of proposals from the international community and that they should be allowed time to consider the alternatives they face.

02 June 2006

United States Offers to Join European-Iranian Nuclear Talks

Washington --The United States has offered to join European-Iranian negotiations over Iran's nuclear program provided that Iran first suspend all uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities.

"[T]o underscore our commitment to a diplomatic solution and to enhance the prospects for success, as soon as Iran fully and verifiably suspends its enrichment and reprocessing activities, the United States will come to the table with our EU-3 colleagues [Britain, France and Germany] and meet with Iran's representatives," Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told reporters in Washington May 31.

The offer marks a shift in policy for the Bush administration, which had previously rejected direct discussions with Tehran on anything but the Iraqi security situation. Rice said, however, that the circumstances now justify Washington's direct involvement in the negotiations.

"We have always been determined to do what we could to support the negotiations," she said. "We now believe that having created a strong climate of opinion ... in which a great number of states are united around a clear concept of what Iran must do -- and that, by the way, includes a precondition of suspension for negotiations -- that the United States might be able now to add weight to the negotiating track by joining these discussions."

Rice said that the move is not unlike the U.S. policy of engaging in multilateral discussions about North Korea's nuclear program. She also stressed that the U.S. offer in no way heralds broader diplomatic relations between the United States and Iran, but is simply intended to provide legitimacy to the negotiating process aimed at steering Iran away from its nuclear weapons ambitions.

"[I]t's an opportunity for Iran to make its intentions clear," she said. "If Iran really wants a negotiated solution, it can suspend its enrichment and enrichment-related activities, [as] it has been required to do in an [International Atomic Energy Agency] Board of Governors' resolution, and we can sit down at the table and talk about how to get to a civil nuclear program that is acceptable to the international community."

Iran has repeatedly claimed that its nuclear program is for peaceful, civilian nuclear energy purposes, but Rice said Tehran's historic behavior has undermined the credibility of its claims with the international community.

"In view of its previous violations of its commitments and the secret nuclear program it undertook, the Iranian regime must persuasively demonstrate that it has permanently abandoned its quest for nuclear weapons," she said.

At the same time that she proposed direct U.S. involvement in the nuclear negotiations, Rice said that the international community is presenting Iran with a clear choice between two courses of action. She said a choice to continue pursuing nuclear weapons would "incur only great costs," in the form of political and economic sanctions and international isolation.

The secretary said if Iran chooses to suspend its enrichment activities, cooperate fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and return to negotiations, this "would lead to the real benefit and longer-term security of the Iranian people, the region, and the world as a whole."

She said the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council (Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States) and Germany would be offering a package of proposed benefits and penalties to Iran based on these two options. Rice plans to be in Vienna June 1 to meet with her counterparts from those countries and finalize the details of the package.

She said that it is now up to Iran to choose its course of action and that the U.N. Security Council and the rest of the international community will respond accordingly.

"I think there is substantial agreement and understanding that Iran now faces a clear choice," she said. "This is the last excuse, in some sense. There have been those who have said, 'Well, if only the negotiations had the potential for the United States to be a part of them, perhaps then Iran would respond.' So now we have a pretty clear path. We have negotiations, if Iran is prepared to suspend. If Iran is not prepared to suspend -- and by the way, this is the understanding that comes out of New York -- that there is another path."

31 May 2006

Rice Warns of Stronger U.N. Action on Iranian Nuclear Program

Washington – If Iran does not respect the U.N. Security Council's presidential statement calling for it to cease uranium enrichment activities by the end of the month, the council will have to consider stronger measures, according to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Speaking to reporters at the State Department April 13, Rice said Iran continues to act in defiance of the international community's demands. "[W]hen the Security Council reconvenes, there will have to be some consequence for that action and that defiance, and we will look at the full range of options available to the Security Council," she added.

"One thing that the Security Council has that the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] does not have is the ability to compel, through Chapter 7 resolutions, member states of the U.N. to obey the will of the international system, Rice said. "And I'm certain that we'll look at measures that could be taken to ensure that Iran knows that they really have no choice but to comply."

The IAEA board of governors referred the Iranian nuclear issue to the Security Council in early March after determining that Tehran was not cooperating with IAEA efforts to verify the nature of Iran's nuclear program. The Security Council issued a unanimous presidential statement March 29 calling on Iran to meet the demands of the IAEA within 30 days.

Rice indicated that the council would consider issuing a Chapter 7 resolution, which could include provisions for sanctions and the use of military force if Iran fails to comply with the council's demands.

The secretary dismissed Iran's efforts to frame the issue in terms of a right to develop civil nuclear power.

"No one questions the right of Iran to have civil nuclear power to increase its energy supply. But any civil nuclear technology would have to be one without the kind of proliferation risk," she said.

Canadian Foreign Minister Peter MacKay, who met with Rice prior to the press availability, affirmed his government's commitment to the international effort to bring Iran into compliance with IAEA demands.

"Canada is in the position that we do support the international need to respond with one voice, the need to demonstrate to Iran that we very clearly want them to comply, upon pain of sanctions. If sanctions are necessary, we do believe, and I think the important message is, that there will be progressive response and progressive consequences," he said.

13 April 2006

Rice Calls for Strong U.N. Response to Iran's Uranium Enrichment

Washington -- Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice warned April 12 that Iran's claim of having successfully enriched a small quantity of uranium will lead only to its further isolation in the international community, and she called on the U.N. Security Council to take "strong steps" in response.

"I do think that the Security Council will need to take into consideration this move by Iran and that it will be time when it reconvenes on this case for strong steps to make certain that we maintain the credibility of the international community on this issue," she told reporters at the State Department.

Iran's announcement of its nuclear achievement came less than two weeks after the Security Council issued a unanimous presidential statement calling on Iran to suspend uranium enrichment and to cooperate with the efforts of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to verify the peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear program.

"It demonstrates that Iran is not adhering to the international community's requirements," Rice said. At the United Nations, where representatives of the five permanent members of the Security Council were gathering for a previously scheduled meeting, U.S. Ambassador John Bolton told reporters, "[I]f Iran does not comply with the demand in the presidential statement we adopted on March 28 to come into compliance with the existing IAEA resolutions, we would consider at that point a resolution under chapter VII which would make the IAEA resolutions binding on Iran."

A Chapter VII resolution, which deals with threats to peace, could include enforcement provisions allowing for sanctions or the use of military force in the event

Iran fails to comply. All five permanent members of the council -- China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States -- have made it clear that they do not want to see Iran with nuclear weapons, according to Bolton. He said that given Iran's record and provocative statements by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad, "leaving a potential nuclear weapons capability in the hands of the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism is not a happy prospect."

Iran agreed to suspend research into uranium enrichment in November 2004 while it discussed the nature of its nuclear program with France, Germany and the United Kingdom, collectively known as the EU-3. Those discussions collapsed in January 2006 when Iran resumed its research activities against the protests of the IAEA and the international community.

Uranium enrichment is the key to both the nuclear fuel cycle and the production of nuclear weapons. The concentration of radioactive isotopes in a uranium compound can produce material suitable to fire nuclear power plants or, at higher concentrations, to produce nuclear bombs.

Rice said that it is this latter possibility that worries the international community. "This is not a question of Iran's right to civil nuclear power. This is a question of that the world does not believe that Iran should have the capability and the technology that could lead to a nuclear weapon," she said.

Rice said the United States would continue working to bring the international community into agreement on a diplomatic solution to the threat posed by Iran's nuclear program.

"We are going to be steady in our diplomatic track here because we believe that a concerted and coherent diplomatic policy that the world is behind will convince the Iranians that they have to come back into compliance with what the international community is demanding of them," she said.

12 April 2006

Rumsfeld Dismisses Reports of Plans To Attack Iran



Washington – The United States and its allies are working toward a diplomatic solution to resolve the ongoing standoff with Iran over its nuclear program, says Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

“The United States of America is on a diplomatic track. That is the president's decision. That's where our European allies are,” Rumsfeld told journalists at an April 11 Pentagon press briefing, where he was joined by Marine General Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Rumsfeld's comments follow several days of media reports alleging that the Pentagon is planning a military strike against Iran's nuclear sites if the Iranian government refuses to cooperate with the international community's demand for full disclosure about its covert nuclear programs.

Rumsfeld said that the Department of Defense continually develops contingency plans, from military action to humanitarian assistance missions, to meet a host of possible security threats. “I am always thinking that maybe there's something we've not thought of or something we could do better,” he said.

Reporters asked whether the United States would be able to meet emerging security threats, given the sizeable commitment of its troops in Iraq. Pace answered that with 2 million active-duty U.S. troops available in addition to those currently deployed in Iraq, the United States has “sufficient personnel, weapons, equipment, you name it, to handle any adversary that might come along.”

“There is obviously concern about Iran,” Rumsfeld said, “It's a country that supports terrorists. It's a country that has indicated an interest in having weapons of mass destruction.”

But, referring to reports that the United States has imminent plans to attack Iran, he said that, “it is just simply not useful to get into fantasyland.”

11 April 2006

Iran "Moving in the Wrong Direction," White House Says

Washington -- The Iranian regime is "moving in the wrong direction," White House press secretary Scott McClellan said after Iranian leaders claimed to have enriched uranium successfully for the first time.

Speaking April 11 to reporters aboard Air Force One en route to Columbia, Missouri, McClellan said the announcement "only further underscores why the international community has serious concerns about the regime's nuclear ambitions." Iran needs to build confidence with the international community instead of defying it, he added.

"This is a regime that has a long history of hiding its nuclear activities from the international community, and refusing to comply with its international obligations. Defiant statements and actions only further isolate the regime from the rest of the world, and further isolate the Iranian people," McClellan said.

The press secretary said the United States and other members of the international community remain concerned that Iran is "developing nuclear weapons or a nuclear weapons capability under the cover of a civilian program." The U.N. Security Council, McClellan said, has called on Iran to "suspend its enrichment and reprocessing activities and comply with its obligations."

McClellan said President Bush has called for exhausting "all diplomatic means" to solve the conflict "before using force," and said the United States will be discussing the matter with other members of the Security Council about next steps "if the regime refuses to change its behavior."

Iran's actions come days before International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director-General Mohamad ElBaradei is to visit the country. On April 28, the IAEA is expected to report to Security Council on whether Iran has met demands for a complete suspension of its uranium enrichment activities. If it has not, the country could face economic sanctions.

"Right now the regime has been given an opportunity to commit to complying with its obligations," the press secretary said.

At the State Department, spokesman Sean McCormack said Iran's uranium enrichment claims give "more weight to the international community to act in a concerted fashion."

“Once again they have chosen the pathway of defiance as opposed to the pathway of cooperation,” he said.

The spokesman said that although he could not confirm the technical details of Iran’s claims, its “stated enrichment activity is not something that is highly enriched uranium,” which is critical to the development of nuclear weapons.

“They made an announcement that they have enriched uranium to the level of 3.5 percent. ... And certainly the level of 3.5 percent is not sufficient to make a nuclear weapon,” he said.

However, the United States maintains that Iran should not be allowed to have reprocessing or enrichment capabilities on its own soil, including activities described as “research and development.”

“[I]t’s not a matter of whether or not they should be able to have peaceful nuclear energy,” he said, but rather whether the country should be entrusted with the technology given its two-decades record of concealing their activities from the IAEA and the international community.

“They have sought to evade telling the truth to the IAEA as well as its former negotiating partners in the EU-3. A qualitative change in behavior would be walking back its nuclear program, coming into compliance with its international obligations and returning to the negotiating table,” McCormack said.

The spokesman said “consistent, concerted, united international pressure” could cause the regime “to change its behavior and its desire to pursue nuclear weapons,” which the international community sees as being “destabilizing for the region as well as the world.”

“[I]f Iran continues down this pathway of defiance, ... you will see a parallel increase in the pressure on Iran from the international community,” McCormack said, including further isolation from the rest of the world.

11 April 2006

Rice in Berlin To Discuss Iran with U.N. Security Council Members

Washington -- Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is meeting in Berlin with permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, plus Germany, to discuss a long-term strategy for dealing with Iran's nuclear program as well as broader regional concerns. Rice, speaking to reporters en route to Berlin overnight March 29-30, also discussed U.S. plans to help the Palestinian people directly instead of supporting the newly elected Hamas government. In addition, the secretary of state briefly discussed Afghanistan's recent release of a man who had been convicted to converting to Christianity.

A presidential statement issued March 29 by the U.N. Security Council "is an international voice to the Iranians that they need to suspend their activities, return to negotiations and that they continue to be isolated," Rice told reporters.

The Security Council's presidential statement demands that Iran suspend uranium enrichment and asks that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report on Iran's compliance in 30 days.

Rice is meeting in Berlin as part of so-called "P-5 plus 1" talks -- the five members of the Security Council: Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States; plus Germany, which has played an important role in negotiating with Iran's government. The March 29 presidential statement restates a recent resolution of the IAEA Board of Governors "to put the weight of the Security Council behind that resolution, and to give the IAEA the weight of the Security Council," Rice said.

Now that the members of the Security Council have agreed on the wording of the statement on Iran, "we don't now have to negotiate text," Rice said. Instead, she told reporters, "[W]e will really have an opportunity to sit and look ahead to what next steps we might wish to take" in dealing with Iran

"We also have a chance to look ahead and talk not just about the nuclear program but about the broader concerns about Iran on terrorism," Rice said. "We can talk about the situation with Iran in the Palestinian Territories, and of course we can talk about the nature of the Iranian regime and the kinds of comments that are coming out of Iran that show that this regime is really -- is a troublesome regime for peace and stability in the Middle East."

Rice said that Zalmay Khalilzad, the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, has not yet had a chance to meet with Iranian officials because his time is consumed by helping Iraqis form a government. Iran is a neighbor of Iraq, and prominent Iraqis have said they would like Khalilzad to meet with his Iranian counterparts to discuss regional issues. Rice cautioned that “people should not put so much weight on” any such meeting. “At an appropriate time, he’ll meet with them,” Rice said.

The United States also is nearly finished with a review of Palestinian assistance programs following the recent election victory of Hamas.

“We’re not going to fund a Hamas-led government,” Rice said.

30 March 2006

United States Urges Iran To Negotiate End to Nuclear Standoff

Washington – The Iranian government is isolating itself by defying the international community’s united call for answers on its nuclear program, says Ambassador Gregory L. Schulte.

“The opportunity for a negotiated solution is still on the table. We need to convince the leadership in Tehran to grasp that opportunity,” Schulte, U.S. permanent representative to the United Nations Office in Vienna, said in a March 16 speech at Chatham House in London.

Schulte said that after several years of trying to verify Iran’s claims that its nuclear program was intended to produce energy and not weapons, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) referred Iran to the U.N. Security Council earlier in March.

The referral was necessary, Schulte said, because:

- The IAEA is unable to certify that Iran’s program is peaceful -- Even after three years of inspections and negotiations, several questions remain unanswered, such as the Iranian nuclear program’s connections to A.Q. Khan, the Pakistani weapons scientist who operated an international black market for nuclear technologies.

- Iran has not cooperated fully with the IAEA -- Iran has refused to allow IAEA to interview key individuals and to provide complete documentation on its nuclear program.

- Iran's leaders continue to acquire the material, equipment, and expertise to produce nuclear weapons -- Schulte said that the IAEA has reported that Iran has enough uranium hexafluoride to produce 10 nuclear weapons. The IAEA also has reported that Iran has started enriching the material – a crucial step to weapons production.

Instead of responding to the international community's concerns, "The leadership in Tehran has thus far chosen a course of flagrant threats and phony negotiation," Schulte said, in an effort to divide IAEA member states and presumably to buy time to continue its nuclear program.

However, contrary to the regime's expectations, Schulte said, "their defiance has increasingly united the international community, leaving Iran increasingly isolated and subject to Security Council action."

Schulte also said that instead of negotiating seriously, the Iranian government is choosing to respond to international isolation by increasing suppression of dissent within Iran.

"The people of Iran deserve better," Schulte said, "The people of Iran deserve nuclear energy without international suspicion."

22 March 2006

U.N. Nuclear Agency Sends Iran Report to Security Council

Washington – The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) concluded discussions about Iran's nuclear activities at the close of its board of governors meeting March 8 and has sent a report to the U.N. Security Council to enlist the council's support in persuading Iran to cooperate with IAEA efforts to monitor its nuclear program.

"Regrettably ... after three years of intensive verification, there remain uncertainties with regard to both the scope and the nature of Iran's nuclear program," IAEA Director-General Mohamed ElBaradei told reporters in Vienna, Austria, after the close of the meeting. "As I mentioned in my report, this is a matter of concern that continues to give rise to questions about the past and current direction of Iran's nuclear program."

“The Director General’s report resoundingly demonstrates that Iran has failed -- on each and every count -- to meet the requests from the board’s February 4 decision,” U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office in Vienna Gregory Schulte told members of the IAEA board.

On February 4, the IAEA board adopted a resolution calling on Iran to suspend its uranium enrichment-related activities, reconsider plans to build a heavy-water reactor, ratify the Additional Protocol and cooperate with the agency by providing full access to individuals and documents related to its nuclear program. The board asked the director-general to prepare a report on Iran’s compliance with these demands within 30 days and convey the report to the U.N. Security Council.

Schulte said Iran has done nothing to address the agency’s concerns. “Quite the contrary, their behavior has only contributed to mounting international concerns about its pursuit of nuclear weapons,” he said.

Speaking to the House International Relations Committee March 8, Assistant Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Robert Joseph said he expects the Security Council to take up the issue of Iranian noncompliance with the IAEA early in the week of March 12. He said the Security Council would not supplant the IAEA’s efforts but reinforce them by lending its weight to the agency’s requests for cooperation.

Unlike the IAEA, the Security Council has the power to take punitive measures, such as imposing sanctions. Senior U.S. officials said, however, that they do not intend to seek sanctions as a first step. Joseph told members of Congress that the United States would like to see a presidential statement from the Security Council demanding Iranian compliance with IAEA resolutions.

A presidential statement requires agreement by all 15 members of the Security Council.

Joseph said that if Iran refused to respect the presidential statement, it would be necessary to draft a Security Council resolution “to put increased pressure on Iran to comply.”

Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs R. Nicholas Burns told the congressional committee members that if the presidential statement and the resolution fail to achieve Iranian cooperation, the Security Council would have to consider targeted

sanctions. He added that even though the United States would take no options off the table, it strongly favors a peaceful, negotiated settlement of the problem.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who is in New York for a meeting with U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, agreed with the measured approach to Security Council action on the issue. He told reporters, "We should all strive for a solution which would not endanger the ability of the IAEA to continue its work in Iran while making sure, of course, there is no danger for the nonproliferation regime."

ElBaradei called the Security Council involvement "a new phase of diplomacy." He told reporters, "The Security Council will lend its weight to the IAEA's efforts so as to make sure Iran will work as closely as possible with us, so as to make sure that Iran takes the required confidence building measures."

Iranian officials indicated that they would continue pursuing uranium enrichment activities in spite of the IAEA's demands. Schulte said Iran already has produced an 85-ton stockpile of uranium hexafluoride gas, which, if enriched, could generate enough fissile material for 10 nuclear weapons. He also said Iran has documents explaining how to cast enriched uranium into hemispheres suitable for bombs.

Joseph dismissed Iran's claim that it is engaged in uranium enrichment for peaceful power generation. He noted that Iran already has a guaranteed fuel supply for its only nuclear power plant and will not have any more plants for at least another 10 years.

"The only plausible explanation for the urgency of the Iranian enrichment program is to produce fissile material that can be used in nuclear weapons as soon as possible, no matter the international cost," he said.

Burns said that the entire international community has come to the same conclusion about the nature of Iran's intentions.

"Iran's actions – its history of deception and continuing efforts to avoid full cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency – have convinced leaders of every political persuasion, in every corner of the globe, that Iran's leaders intend to acquire nuclear weapons," he said.

Schulte told the members of the IAEA board, "The time has now come for the Security Council to act."

8 March 2006

U.S., Russia Still Demanding Iran End Pursuit of Nuclear Weapons



Washington -- The United States and Russia remain united in rejecting any effort by Iran to enrich nuclear fuel within its territory, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said March 7 after meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at the State Department.

“The United States has been very clear that [uranium] enrichment and reprocessing on Iranian soil is not acceptable because of the proliferation risk,” Rice said. She added that the United States and Russia “are both operating from the February 4th resolution” by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) board of governors calling for the Iran issue to go to the United Nations Security Council.

Rice added that “the Russians did not tell us of any new proposal that they have made to the Iranians” concerning small-scale enrichment of nuclear fuel on Iranian territory. Russia has proposed a joint venture – which the United States supports – that calls for enrichment and reprocessing of nuclear fuel on Russian soil, with fuel provided to Iran by Russia for civil use.

“There is no compromise, new Russian proposal,” Lavrov, speaking through an interpreter, said during the joint press briefing with Rice.

Lavrov said Russia’s discussions with Iran have been “about finding a way to implement” the IAEA resolution. The IAEA said it would send the issue to the United Nations unless Iran’s government halts all enrichment activities and abides by commitments to the IAEA, including full cooperation with inspectors.

The IAEA is meeting March 6-8 to review a report on Iran’s activities by IAEA Director-General Mohammed ElBaradei.

At the White House, press secretary Scott McClellan said the ElBaradei’s report “continues to raise troubling concerns” because it shows that Iran still is engaging in enrichment-related activities “in direct confrontation with the international community and the demands of the international community.”

“After this review is complete of the latest report, we expect that it will very shortly go to the Security Council, and then, those issues will be discussed before the Security Council,” as part of what McClellan described as a “new phase of diplomacy.”

Rice said “there is still time, of course, for the Iranians to react.” She added that the United States is not advocating sanctions against Iran as a first step by the U.N. Security Council.

In addition to Iran, Rice said she and Lavrov discussed U.S.-Russia cooperation on global issues including the Middle East and so-called “frozen conflicts” involving the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan and Georgia’s South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions; Russia’s presidency of the Group of Eight (G8) nations; and domestic developments in Russia.

“I appreciate the candid and good spirit in which we discussed those issues and in which our questions have been answered,” Rice said.

7 March 2006

Iran Might Face Tangible Consequences if Nuclear Threat Persists

Washington -- If Iran’s government continues seeking nuclear weapons, it will face “tangible and painful consequences,” warned John Bolton, U.S. representative to the United Nations.

“Given the comprehensive nature of the threat, we must be prepared to rely on comprehensive solutions and use all tools at our disposal to stop the threat that the Iranian regime poses,” Bolton told participants at a policy conference sponsored by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee March 5 in Washington.

Bolton said Iran’s pattern of diplomatic “doublespeak” with European and Russian negotiators over its nuclear program reveals the regime’s true intent to develop nuclear weapons.

“He said it is critical for the matter to come before the U.N. Security Council to help mobilize international public opinion.

“Alternatively,” the ambassador said, “if Iran follows the course of Libya and makes the strategic decision that the pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, the sponsorship of terror and the oppression of its people makes it less, not more secure, then relations with the outside world can improve dramatically.”

Bolton's speech came a day before the International Atomic Energy Agency meets to forward its latest findings on Iran's nuclear activities to the U.N. Security Council.

In his speech, Bolton also discussed U.S. efforts to counter the Iranian regime's sponsorship of terrorists in the region and U.S. initiatives to support freedom and human rights in Iran as a means to counter Iran's repression of domestic political opposition.

"The longer we wait to confront the [nuclear] threat Iran poses, the harder and more intractable it will become to solve," he said.

6 March 2006

Iran's Noncompliance Threatens Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime

Washington — Iran's "pattern of deception and denial" about its nuclear program caused it to be brought to the attention of the United Nations Security Council, according to a State Department official.

For more than three years the International Atomic Energy Agency has investigated Iran's undeclared nuclear fuel cycle activities, said Andrew K. Semmel, acting deputy assistant secretary of state for nuclear nonproliferation policy and negotiations.

The IAEA has written nine reports based on those investigations, he told an audience at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia, February 24.

Those reports show that Iran systematically has carried out secret nuclear activities since the mid-1980s, including enriching uranium and separating plutonium -- elements essential for nuclear weapons and for nothing else, Semmel said.

Iran's repeated response, he said, has been deception, denial and a failure to cooperate fully -- and continued pursuit of nuclear fuel cycle capability.

Iran can have no sensible economic reason for its nuclear activities, Semmel said. Its huge investment in its nuclear program -- especially given its world-class oil and gas reserves, its lack of any functioning nuclear reactors and Russia's commitment to supply nuclear fuel for the only Iranian reactor currently being built, make it impossible to conclude anything other than that it is pursuing a weapons program, he said.

Recently, the IAEA inspectors found an Iranian document indicating that Iran had "received information from a clandestine source on casting and machining hemispheres of uranium metal," Semmel continued, adding that there is no application for such hemispheres other than nuclear weapons. In addition, Semmel said, Iran has yet to explain fully its relations with this clandestine proliferation network.

Those findings prompted the IAEA board of governors to report Iran to the United Nations Security Council on February 4, Semmel said. The United States expects the Security Council to act on the matter after the next IAEA board meeting, scheduled for March 6.

"Iran's continued failure to comply will necessitate a long, hard look at the nonproliferation regime and what needs to be done to strengthen it," Semmel said. Without such a review other states might emulate Iran's example by secretly developing their own nuclear weapons programs, he said, concluding, "The stakes involved are extremely high."

27 February 2006

Iran Must Halt Uranium Enrichment Activities, State's Burns Says



The international community is united in its belief that Iran should not be allowed to engage in any uranium enrichment activities, according to Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs R. Nicholas Burns.

Burns told a CNN correspondent in Moscow February 21 that the September 2005 and February 2006 resolutions from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) were very clear in saying that "Iran is not to engage in enrichment activities of any kind whatsoever, whether it's limited centrifuge research, which they are engaged in right now at their plant in Natanz, or anything else."

The Iran nuclear issue was an important agenda item at the Group of Eight (G8) political directors' meeting in Moscow, where Burns met with his counterparts from Canada, France, Germany, United Kingdom, Italy, Japan and Russia.

Iran's enrichment research could give it the capability to produce a nuclear weapon, Burns said, adding, "We cannot allow Iran to achieve that capability, and that's why countries as diverse as Egypt and Sri Lanka and India and the United States spoke with one voice a couple of weeks ago to say no enrichment activities of whatever kind."

Twenty-seven of the 35 nations represented on the IAEA Board of Governors voted to report Iran's nuclear activities to the U.N. Security Council at a February 4 meeting. Three countries opposed the resolution.

Burns expressed the hope that Iran would recognize its international isolation and choose to suspend its enrichment activities and return to negotiations on its nuclear program. Otherwise, he said, the U.N. Security Council will take up the issue following a report from the March 6 meeting of the IAEA Board of Governors.

The under secretary said the United States would support a gradual set of steps by the Security Council to pressure Iran into cooperating with the international community.

He added that that Iran has brought this situation upon itself. "The Iranians have been given every opportunity to negotiate, but they walked away from negotiations unilaterally, and thus they now need to face the Security Council and the world community," he said.

France, Germany and the United Kingdom (collectively known as the EU-3) negotiated with Iran to find an internationally acceptable way for Iran to develop civil nuclear power capabilities while ensuring against a nuclear weapons proliferation risk. Those discussions collapsed in January after Iran ended its moratorium on uranium conversion activities and enrichment research.

Russia proposed a plan in October 2005 that would have allowed Iran to develop civil nuclear power with Russian reactor fuel. Burns called this "a perfectly reasonable proposal" and said the United States supports Russia's efforts, but to date, Iran has shown little interest in the offer.

Burns dismissed the notion that the United States should engage with Iran directly and offer it security guarantees.

"They not only have pursued their nuclear ambitions and support for terrorism, they have a much more muscular, and some would say aggressive foreign policy toward their own neighbors in the Middle East," he said. "This is not the time for the

United States to be quieting Iran with security assurances that they don't deserve to have.”

22 February 2006

World Must Be Firm on Iran Nuclear Issue, U.S. Official Says

Washington – The international community must use the time between now and the March 6 meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency’s (IAEA) board of governors to convince Iran to comply with the demands the board outlined in its February 4 resolution on the Iranian nuclear program, according to Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Robert Joseph.

“I think what is necessary to stop Iran is a firm indication that the international community not only will speak to this issue, but will take whatever measures are necessary to convince Iran that it is in its interest to forego a nuclear weapons capability,” Joseph told reporters at a press briefing in Washington February 6.

However, he sounded a cautionary note about the difficulty of convincing Iran to reverse course on its nuclear program. “It’s a very difficult thing to do. And what we’ve seen to date is a very determined Iranian regime, determined to acquire a nuclear weapons capability.”

Joseph spoke to reporters two days after the IAEA’s board of governors passed a resolution calling on Iran to suspend its nuclear activities and cooperate with the agency’s monitoring efforts. The board asked IAEA Director-General Mohamed El-Baradei to report these demands to the U.N. Security Council and follow up with an additional report on the implementation of the resolution following the board’s March meeting.

The resolution was adopted with the support of 27 of the 35 countries represented on the board and with only three dissenting votes. Joseph called the vote “a very clear and sharp condemnation of Iran’s failure to take the steps that the IAEA board over the course of the last two and a half years have identified as necessary.” Joseph said it is now Iran’s responsibility to respond to the IAEA’s concerns, but he offered little hope that the Tehran regime would act in a constructive manner. Following the IAEA vote, he noted, Iran declared that it would end cooperation with IAEA inspectors and resume full-scale uranium enrichment activities.

“[W]e have watched Iran proceed step by step, conversion to enrichment-related activities, in a way that demonstrates very clearly that they are moving forward to a nuclear weapons capability,” Joseph said. Iran agreed with France, Germany and the United Kingdom (the EU-3) in the November 2004 Paris Agreement that it would suspend uranium conversion and enrichment activities while the parties negotiated an arrangement to ensure that Iran’s nuclear program would be limited to peaceful, civilian purposes.

Iran unilaterally broke with that agreement in August 2005 when it resumed conversion of uranium to UF-6 gas, the first step in the nuclear fuel cycle. It further violated the agreement in January 2006 by resuming research into enrichment, which would allow it to process UF-6 into fuel-grade or weapons-grade uranium.

Joseph insisted that the current confrontation is not about denying Iran access to civilian nuclear power, a right that it enjoys under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. “This is about stopping Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability, and there is no right under the treaty that provides for enrichment if the purpose of that enrichment is for a nuclear weapons program,” he said.

7 February 2006

Bush Supports Russian Plan To Handle Iranian Nuclear Material

President Bush said Iran should be allowed to have a civilian nuclear program, but only



under conditions such as those proposed by Russia that would limit Tehran’s access to nuclear material and waste that could be used to make a weapon.

Speaking to the press January 26, Bush said he supported the following conditions proposed by Russia: “[T]he material used to power the plant would be manufactured in Russia, delivered under IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] ... inspectors to Iran to be used in that plant, [and] the waste of which will be picked up by the Russians and returned to Russia.

“I think that is a good plan. The Russians came up with the idea, and I support it,” he said.

The president said that while civilian nuclear power should be allowed, “I don't believe non-transparent regimes that threaten the security of the world should be allowed to gain the technologies necessary to make a weapon.”

Bush said the Iranian regime has indicated its intention to have a nuclear weapon, and that the United States and its international partners are continuing to send a “focused message” to Iran that its “desires for a weapon are unacceptable.”

Bush also said the United States will support freedom movements and reformers around the world, including those opposed to the Iranian government.

“[T]oday's reformers will be tomorrow's leaders,” he said. “And therefore we will work with groups that demand for people to be given the natural rights of men and women. And that right is to live in a free society. “

26 January 2006

Iran Risking "Escalation" of Nuclear Standoff, White House Says



Washington -- Iran's removal of United Nations seals from nuclear equipment at its Natanz facility risks a “serious escalation” of the country's standoff with the international community over its nuclear program, White House press secretary Scott McClellan said.

Speaking to the press January 10, McClellan repeated his warning that the issue might need referral to the U.N. Security Council if Iran does not comply with previous agreements and “does not negotiate in good faith” with the international community. The press secretary said that “a growing majority within the international community” shares this view.

Should Iran proceed with uranium enrichment and reprocessing, it further will violate the November 2004 Paris agreement negotiated with France, Germany and the United Kingdom (the EU-3), he said.

McClellan warned that if Iran were to master the technology of uranium enrichment, which he said is the intended purpose of its enrichment plant, “it would be able to apply that technology to a covert enrichment program which could be used to manufacture [nuclear] weapons.”

He said the “serious concern” throughout the international community about Iran’s behavior is “well founded,” partly due to Iran’s “history of concealing and hiding [its] nuclear activities from the international community,” as well as its continued noncompliance of its nuclear safeguard obligations.

“It’s also why the international community has sought objective guarantees from Iran that the regime is not developing nuclear weapons under the guise of a civilian program,” he said.

McClellan said the United States is in discussions with European countries and others about how best to move forward and resume negotiations with Iran.

The United States is continuing to work to resolve the crisis “in a peaceful and diplomatic manner,” he said, repeating President Bush’s statement that “Iran is not Iraq.” However, he said Bush has also “made it clear we never take options off the table.”

“Everybody in the international community is sending a clear message to Iran that it needs to abide by the Paris agreement, come back to negotiations, act in good faith, and provide objective guarantees that it can be trusted and that it’s not developing nuclear weapons under the guise of a civilian program,” he said.

10 January 2006